

POULTRY DEPARTMENT.

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To Prevent The Chicks From Crowding.

The writer of an article, published in the California Cultivator, is not the only one that has had trouble to teach chickens to go into the roosts. The device recommended is very simple and inexpensive.

How to prevent chicks crowding when removed from the brooders was one of my serious difficulties, in fact, it was the difficulty that invited failure and caused me deep anxiety. I had put a hundred half-grown chickens into a large and comfortable house, a house that had held forty large hens very comfortably. The house was clean, the floors well sanded and covered with clean wheat straw. I put the chicks in at night spreading them around, in the straw and the next morning to my grief I found half a dozen of the best and largest dead, trampled on, flat as a pancake. The others looked as if they had been through a sweat bath. I then put perches in the house and set them on the perches, going around after supper and patiently lifting chick by chick, holding each a little while on the perch in hopes that it would stay there, or fall asleep before I removed my hands and never dream he had been moved, only to find them in a few minutes again piled up in a corner like a big snow bank, and the following morning half a dozen dead. I was in sore trouble and did not know what to do, for I had nearly a thousand youngsters and had not room to put them out in colony coops, which is by far the best plan. At last I decided to make it as uncomfortable for them to crowd as it was for me to try to prevent them.

I bought a bundle of six-foot laths and made a little platform or floor, by nailing them one inch and a half apart, the width of a lath, on stringers one inch by three. This made a flooring of small perches three inches above the ground, and made it so uncomfortable for them to crowd that it entirely prevented it. I placed regular perches, four by five inches above the lath floor, or platform, and in a few days on making my nightly rounds with my lantern, had the satisfaction of finding all the chicks on the regulation perches.

A Typical Would-be Poultryman.

A correspondent of Farm Poultry, writing from Alabama, wants advice about going into the poultry business. The editor answers at considerable length. Most of it is in line with similar matter that we have published in the past. One point is new, that market conditions are liable to change. That is something that is seldom taken into consideration. Yet it is an important point, to be weighed well in locating. However, the tendency of prices for poultry and poultry products has been upward for several years and there does not seem to be any prospect of a permanent drop.

I desire to embark in the poultry business, but know absolutely nothing about it, and ask your judgment and advice before undertaking it.

I have a piece of land containing twelve acres about four miles from Mobile. The quality of the land is medium, well watered, slightly rolling, and dotted with some dozen very large oak shade trees. The climate is warm and dry.

Our egg market runs from 20c. @ 40c. per dozen. Broilers are in demand the year round at 25c. @ 40c. each. The market is always open, as Mobile has about 4,500 people. The cost to deliver to market will be nothing, as it is only an hour's drive, and I have telephone

connection to all parts of the city. Ordinary food for the chickens can be bought as cheaply here as in any part of the United States.

We wish to know about how many laying hens and how many broilers could be raised on this size lot, and whether you think live interest with enough capital would make it profitable, and if so, what would be an approximate average?

What kind of stock, and what literature would you advise, and where can same be secured? X. X.

This is one of many times when I feel that to advise a man intelligently—to give him the advice he needs in such a way that he will appreciate it, I ought to know much more about his ideals and his motives. Why does he desire to embark in the poultry business? Is it because he has this land, wants to make it productive, and has heard that poultry keeping is easy light work, and very profitable? Has he had any experience at it in farming, gardening, or growing, or handling stock of any kind—that is, in lines where many of the conditions and requirements parallel those of poultry keeping? Such experience—if it made him skillful in any of these lines—is of great value to the beginner in poultry keeping, saving him from most of the mistakes made by beginners who know nothing of any of these lines.

However, lacking the full expression of the thoughts of this correspondent, the advice which may be given him with some assurance that it will fit his case is:—

Don't begin poultry keeping as a business until you know by experience what you can do with poultry. Begin first in a small way, with a few hens that you can easily care for in connection with other occupation. Or if you are eager to acquire information more rapidly, go to work on some poultry farm, and keep at work on poultry farms until you know enough about the business to make your services in demand. To put it another way, don't put your ability to establish and conduct a poultry business to the proof until it begins to attract favorable notice from men whose judgment is good on such matters.

Waiting for outside recognition of qualification as a poultryman, is, as I am well aware, not at all to the taste of most of those who want to go into poultry keeping. A man's own ideas of what he can do generally antedate their reflections in the minds of others by a good many moons, and invariably he thinks that he sees right, and the others are blind. This does not make so much difference to the man interested if he is not able to start for himself, for then by force of circumstances he must wait for his opportunity. But if he has land, some capital, and is free to indulge his disposition to go his own way, he is almost sure to begin poultry keeping on a considerable scale under conditions that make it almost certain that his capital and his interest in the business will be used up before the time when—under such conditions he might reasonably expect to be getting a fair compensation from the business.

No one ought to begin on a business scale until he has worked for some one doing business with poultry, or for himself as an amateur long enough to know, with knowledge proved in practice and observation, so much about the business that he does not need to ask elementary questions.

I know from such knowledge of people going into the poultry business that one of the hardest things to do is to persuade them to wait until they do really know something about it. If a man is so situated that he can get a few hens and keep fowls for some years in a small way with the idea of giving more attention to them, or giving all his time to them when the poultry interests by natural growth require it, there is some hope of persuading him to go slow, otherwise he will in nearly every instance start in his own way or on the advice of some one who will encourage him to go ahead, and he will easily find such

advice if he looks after it. A good many do keep going until they find some one reputed to be an authority on such matters who will indorse their plunge into poultry keeping.

The market and food conditions as stated by this correspondent may or may not be correct. I think he is probably in error about the cost of food as compared with "any part" of the United States. While not posted on prices in Alabama, my impression is that there and in most parts of the south grain is higher than in the grain growing areas. Most reports from correspondents in the far south indicate a range of prices nearer those of the eastern cities, with poultry products not relatively high except at winter resorts. When starting in poultry keeping to supply a local market one ought to know pretty well the other sources of supply for that market, and also the possibility and prospects of changes in conditions affecting the supply, especially in localities where there is not much in the way of specializing in poultry; changes in conditions may spoil a business before it is well established. Thus suppose that in the vicinity of Mobile the farmers within a few years give so much attention to poultry that local market conditions are altogether changed. This of course is a risk incident to many kinds of business, but there are places in which a change would produce little or no effect, while there are others where the effects would be very discouraging. The farmers of Massachusetts, with many large cities and towns depending mostly on the west for supplies of poultry produce, might double or quadruple their product without effecting those doing an exclusive poultry business; but in a section where there were few large cities or where more attention was given to farming a slight general increase of the product of the farms might suffice to take all the profit out of the business for the local poultryman.

I don't say these things to unduly discourage any beginner or to give the impression that in poultry keeping more than in anything else one must be sure of his ground before he begins. All I urge on those who would begin is that they apply to poultry keeping investments as much caution and deliberation as they would to investments in a line with which they were familiar, or would urge on any one not familiar with such a line.

Live interest and capital are only two of the factors in profitable poultry keeping. The prime factors are knowledge and experience. Without them the interest is likely to fail and the capital be frittered away.

Some Pointers About Temperature.

In our mild climate we have a great advantage over poultry keepers in almost any part of the country. Still there are often days in winter (if you are trying to raise early broilers) when the temperature is much too cold for young chicks. The following was written for the Petaluma Poultry Journal:

We hear a great deal about how to feed the chicks, and that if we feed this or that kind of food it will even make the roosters crow when three weeks old, but strangely enough there is little ever said about how to water them. Of course, it is frequently said that we must have fresh water before them all the time, but that is not enough on the subject. I prefer to give my chicks the fresh water heated to blood heat or even more when I put it in the runs in the morning, so that when the chicks come out the water will be pretty warm and will gradually assume the temperature of the house. If you will spend a little time and watch them when they come out of the brooder, you will see how they run for the water fountain. I always notice that they do not drink as much of the warm water as when I have cold water before them, and by half-way judicious feeding and keeping them clean they have very



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little bowel trouble. This I regard as a very important point in the care of little chicks.

I wish to refer to another point in this line. Judging from what I have been able to observe, I believe that we pay too much attention to the brooder and not half enough to the house. I make it a rule that if the house is not up to 60 degrees in the morning I heat it up to that temperature as quickly as possible, so that when the chicks emerge from the brooder they will not get chilled. The experienced chicken man is more guided by the way the chicks are acting in the brooder and will see at a glance if too hot or too cold, but for my part I think it more important to know the temperature of the house. My brooders are heated by gas, and if up to the desired temperature, I never change the flame but give them more and more air from the top, the older they get.

I tried only once to reduce the temperature down to 70 degrees in twenty-four hours, as recommended by Mr. Shackleton, and ran it thus for three days, but I did not like the effect upon the chicks, as they began to get droopy, and I was afraid of the result, so I raised the temperature to 90 degrees. We, here in the glorious climate of California, have sometimes very changeable weather, and our cold is ten times more penetrating than the dry cold of the eastern states. Also our young stock seems less able to resist the cold.

Weak chicks are not worth spending time and money on. We should try only to propagate from strong, healthy hens and roosters which are known for their good qualities.

Small Poultry Runs in Rainy Weather.

Are your poultry provided with shelter in bad weather? If not they should be. The reference to digging up or plowing the poultry yards evidently has in mind soils that are sticky with clay. On our light sandy land it is a good idea to have the run dug up or plowed two or three times each year. The following article is from the American Poultry Journal:

When the weather is rainy or boisterous a fowl is a particularly wretched looking object. Directly rain commences the poultry will be seen with drooping tails, hurrying off to the nearest shelter. If there is no protection from the wet they will stand close together, huddled up, wet through and the picture of misery. In a farmyard there is almost invariably a barn or other outhouse where the birds can get out of the rain and wind and remain in comparative comfort. But in hundreds of small confined runs in which the majority of poultry lovers have to keep their fowls there is, as a rule, no protection whatever.

The small houses having a space underneath, which can be purchased from many appliance makers, are very useful in this respect. But the ordinary home-made little houses and runs seldom have any provision for a rainy day, so the unfortunate birds either have to stand out in the open or crowd into the roosting-house. The moist heat engendered by their damp bodies is liable to promote cold and roup under such conditions. The value of having the house ventilated under the roofs is specially apparent in wet weather. Cleanliness too, must be observed with the birds remaining in the house most of the time. An excellent material with which to cover the floor is moss spread three or four inches deep. It absorbs the moisture, is dry and warm for the feet, is clean and can easily be cleaned with a rake or trowel. During a continuance of wet weather, as we